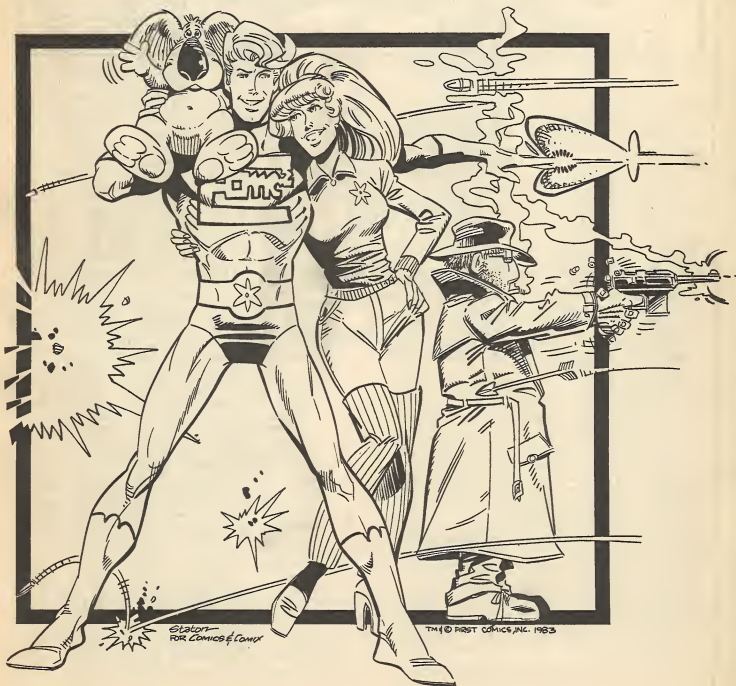


The Telegraph Wire

ISSUE 9



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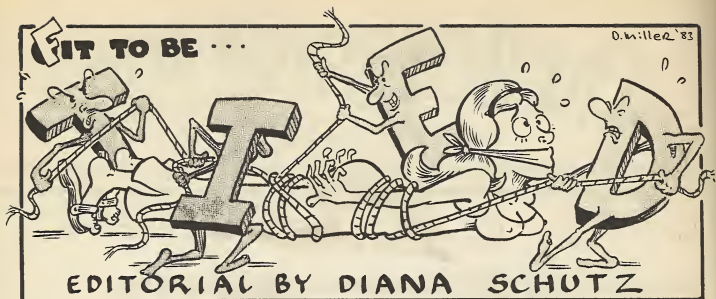


Story
FOR COMICS & CONIX

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FIT TO BE ...

D. Miller '83



EDITORIAL BY DIANA SCHUTZ

Yes, another blithering attempt by ye editor to make sense of the world around her. With thanks and a wink of the eye to David Miller for the "bondage" logo (Overstreet, take note!) and to Clay Geerdes and Par Holman for this issue's "fitting" illustration.

Thanks to my friend Dick Swan, whose eclectic collection rivals anything I've ever seen, I managed to get my hands on a copy of Freddy Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* and have finally plowed through all of its 397 pages. A necessary education, I thought, if rather dry reading. After too many years of university psychology courses, I'm surprised to find that this eminent psychiatrist lacked the ability to construct a sound psychological argument, presented no experimental data, and instead resorted to cheap emotional exhortation compounded by common logical fallacies. In his defense, I'm forced to admit that he was writing in the early '50s (and for the *Ladies' Home Journal* yet!), still some time before academic psychology adopted the guise of Scientific Method.

In any case, and not to speak ill of the dead, I have to give Dr. Wertham his due. Especially now, since his rallying cry against violence in comics has been taken up by the likes of Don and Maggie Thompson as well as Cat Yronwode--writers whose abilities I admire and whose opinions I respect, whether or not I agree with them.

With the growing relaxation of the Comics Code and the advent of non-Code colour comics, today's market is saturated with violence and death. One need only take a look at DC's OMEGA MEN--truly the most gruesome series I've ever read--to realize how grim the state of the art has become. I grant that war is not pretty and I can understand writer Roger Slifer's intent to present a realistic perspective on the vicissitudes of battle, but that doesn't mean I like the comic. OMEGA MEN just isn't fun to read. But, by God, it sells!

And I don't mean to single out OMEGA

MEN. Frank Miller's DAREDEVIL has been a common target of the anti-violence campaign and Pacific Comics' TWISTED TALES, in the grand EC horror tradition, overflows with scenes of bloody gore. Violence (or the lack thereof) is clearly not the criterion of a comic's quality and both TWISTED TALES and the Miller DAREDEVILS are favourites of mine. And yet...

I'm certainly not advocating the sort of sanitized violence to which we are subjected on TV, for example, as that propagates the illusion of violence-without-consequences--itself a psychologically damaging perspective. And I've often felt that the graphic, gut-wrenching violence which Frank Miller is accused of perpetrating in his work is exactly the sort to force the reader to gulp in horror and to appreciate a gentler attitude in his or her own life. And yet...

While I concede that conflict is the essence of drama and that physical conflict seems inherent to the superhero genre, I do question the extent to which violence has infiltrated the comics medium. We've all grown used to the obligatory "action" sequences, but to be bombarded by page after page of brutal fighting and hideous disfigurements/dis-memberments/death is excessively morbid and makes for damned depressing reading. An altogether ban on violence is not the solution. As Harlan Ellison so eloquently put it in the *Glass Teat*: "Dispensing with violence on TV is tantamount to dropping a Bufferin and thinking it'll cure your cancer." Presumably the same applies to comics. However, gratuitous violence is an entirely different matter. It is, by its very nature, an indication of poor

craftsmanship and has no place in any artistic endeavour. Countless character deaths--followed by prompt resurrections--lose whatever impact they might originally have had and quickly become meaningless. And boring.

I'm basically ambivalent about the question of "protecting" children from scenes of violence in the visual media. I'd hate to see comics regress to the enforced blandness of the early days of the Code and, in any case, I think kids today are a lot more hip than we give them credit for. I don't buy Dr. Wertham's claim that reading "crime comics" encourages juvenile delinquency, although I wonder at the market's obsession with superheroes beating up so-called "evildoers". What ever happened to romance? Or funny animals, for that matter? Where is Millie the Model today?

Non-Code colour comics have also thrown wide the bedroom doors and sexuality has crept into the open marketplace. Eclipse Enterprises apparently took quite a bit of flak over the sex scene in SABRE #1--a scene which was portrayed with an extraordinary amount of good taste, I might add. Pacific has few qualms about frontal nudity, especially in their Baxter books, and Marvel's Epic line seems to be following suit. In fact, the question of sex in colour comics seems to have raised more hue and cry than the question of violence--a telltale comment on our society, unfortunately. And sadly curious that not a word of complaint is uttered regarding Junior's Code-approved bathroom fantasies of the typically decolleté Dazzler...

Sex and violence, when tastefully presented, can be appropriate fare for comics, in my opinion. Yet, who's to judge the question of taste? And who's to judge the question of gratuitous use of sex and violence? Presumably the enlightened reader and/or editor. Unfortunately, editors

are under the pressure of sales, and so long as readers--enlightened or otherwise--shell out their dollars for the biff! bang! socko! school of comics, this will continue to be the norm.

One mid-western comics dealer has, in fact, taken it upon himself to adjudicate such matters and consequently refuses to sell certain books to minors, whether or not the books themselves are labelled "for adults only". I certainly don't favour this kind of arbitrary censorship, and yet I can understand the dealer's reasons for proclaiming himself judge and jury. He is, quite reasonably, afraid of the power of the Mid-western Moral Majority Mothers and the possibility of being put out of business for selling "pornography" to youngsters. In this age of religious fundamentalism, it's not completely far-fetched to imagine militant mothers on the political warpath over their children's comic literature. And should another Dr. Wertham rise to public prominence... Well, one hates to speculate.

There are several questions at issue here--questions about the excessive use of violence and sex in comics and their effects on the readership, questions about the necessity of "protecting" children, questions about censorship--and none of them admit of easy answers. In this issue's interview, Joe Staton suggests a grading system for comics, similar to that employed for movies. This is, so far, one of the sanest proposals I've heard for at least beginning to deal with these complex problems. And although I have certain qualms about censorship in any form, and agree to some extent with the issues raised by Clay Geerdes in his column, self-regulation by the industry seems far preferable to and decidedly less frightening than externally imposed restrictions on our reading fare.

NEO-WERTHAMISM...



(C) Geerdes and Holman

THE TELEGRAPH WIRE #9, May 1983. Published bi-monthly by Comics and Comix, Inc., 2461 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, California, 94704. Copyright (C) 1983 individual contributors. All rights reserved. Publisher: Comics and Comix, Inc. (John Barrett "don't call me 'Chief'"). Editor and (almost) Everything Else: Diana Schutz. Design Consultant and Cover Logo: Tom Orzechowski. Cover Illustration: Joe Staton. Moral Support: Butch Lee. All information contained herein is accurate to the best of our knowledge.

EGGHEAD EVOLUTIONS

by JOHN BARRETT
PUBLISHER

I spent so many years telling people that it was alright for adults to read comics that somewhere along the line I forgot comics were for kids, too.

I was hit between the eyes with this fact when I attended a Marvel editorial/sales meeting last December. At last I would be in a position to confront some of the industry's "bigwigs" about why they insist on producing books such as TEAM AMERICA and US 1 that don't appeal to our market. They quickly answered that these books were not targeted at our audience. Simple. They were intended to attract the younger reader and to create future generations of comic readers.

In days past I would have said "Why don't you stick to what you do best and let Archie, Harvey, and Whitman nurture this market?" Unfortunately, while I wasn't looking, Whitman and Harvey went down the tubes, making Archie the last bastion of children's comics.

At one time I thought that children would appreciate the same "higher quality" books which appeal to older readers. I don't know why I assumed this--their books certainly don't appeal to us, even though

I do admit getting an occasional chuckle out of an ARCHIE. As a test, I questioned my oldest son's peer group (six-year olds!) and found that the "funny comics" group had a much greater appeal, though highly merchandised titles such as STAR WARS, etc., came in a close second.

The result of this "discovery" is a warning to you, the serious fan. Not every comic published is meant for you. Be selective and buy what you like--just because the comic carries a certain company logo doesn't mean it is great or awful. Don't make the mistake I did. COMICS & COMIX will make an effort to support all comics that are published, whatever their intended markets. The industry needs the youth customer as well as the mature buyer to continue its newfound strength. The larger the customer base, the greater the chance there will be books available which appeal to you.

Until next time...

P.S. At the time of this writing, Marvel had just announced they will make an attempt to pick up the Harvey line. Failing that, they will definitely be developing their own comics for younger kids.

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6

STORES IN
CALIFORNIA

Sergio Aragonés, artist for Mad Magazine and Groo Comics will be appearing in Berkeley on May 21st at 4PM.

IF YOU WERE UPSET WHEN

DARK PHOENIX

DIED...

YOU'LL REALLY HATE
WHAT HAPPENS TO

STORM!

IN ISSUE #173 OF

X-MENTM

ON SALE IN JUNE!

MAIN LINES

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

The new **SWORDS OF CEREBUS**, vol. 5, will feature a six-page Cerebus "vignette" conceived, written, pencilled, and inked by Barry Windsor-Smith. Long-time Cerebus fans know the Impact Windsor-Smith had on the early issues of **CEREBUS**, in terms of style and approach, and it seems fitting that the original **CONAN** artist should try his hand at depicting the earth-pig born. In addition, Windsor-Smith will contribute the front and back covers of the book, scheduled for release in July.

Cutey Bunny fans can also look forward to more of Joshua Quagmire's curvacious rabbit appearing in a two-part Unique Story in **CEREBUS** #51 and #52. Gosharooty!



A page from Windsor-Smith's Cerebus story

ARCHIE/RED CIRCLE

The most exciting news of late from Archie is the proposed **KATY KEENE SPECIAL**, a select reprint starring Bill Woggon's fashion queen! Due out in July or August, the book will have a probable \$2.00 cover price and could be the first in a line of **KATY** reprint collections, if sales warrant.

And all Katy Keene fans should check out **COMICS & COMIX** for recent issues of **KATY KEENE MAGAZINE**, now in stock. Published by Craig Leavitt, the world's leading Katy fan and scholar, **KATY KEENE MAGAZINE** features articles, illustrations, paper doll cut-outs, and more, all showcasing our favourite pin-up queen!

DC COMICS

Beginning this fall, most of the DC line will switch to Mando paper and the 60¢ books will go to 75¢. Well, we all knew a price increase was inevitable, but hopefully the better quality Mando paper will help compensate for the depletion of our wallets. And with DC jumping the price gun, can Marvel be far behind?

More interesting news from DC is that



Bill Woggon's Katy Keene

(C) Archie Comics

THE NEW TEEN TITANS and **THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES** will both switch to Baxter paper and go direct-only as of this fall. There may still continue to be newsstand versions of both titles, but these would apparently be printed on regular paper stock and the storylines would follow one year behind the directs.

RONIN is now on a bi-monthly schedule to allow creator Frank Miller more time to produce the excellent quality already apparent in the title's first issue.

Keith Giffen will plot and pencil a **CREEPER** mini-series, meaning he'll be leaving behind his chores on **THE OMEGA MEN**, though he will continue to be "unofficially involved" with the book, according to writer Roger Slifer.

And Trevor von Eeden fans can look forward to his unique talents on **THRILLER**, a new 32-page, quality format, ongoing series which will retail for \$1.25. **THRILLER** is writer Robert Loren Fleming's first series for DC and features a seven-member "mission impossible" team.

EAGLE COMICS

Titan Distributors plan to reprint some of **JUDGE DREDD**'s adventures in a regular



Preview artwork for **AZTEC ACE**, pencilled by Mike Hernandez and inked by Alan Weiss

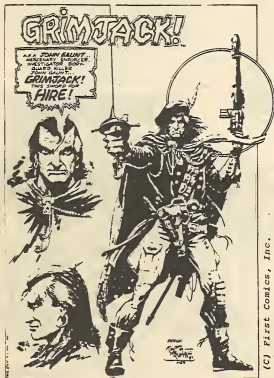
Artwork (C) Mike Hernandez

Sparta-printed comic. IPC, the British publisher, has apparently licensed foreign reprint rights to Titan, who is now forming Eagle Comics to print and distribute the work of Britain's most popular writers and artists, including Brian Bolland, Mike McMahon, John Wagner, Pat Mills, Ian Gibson, and Dave Gibbons. Though no release date has yet been confirmed, JUDGE DREDD will be a 32-page direct-only title with a \$1.00 cover price.

ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES

The following news item was not going to see print this issue--until I saw it plastered over the front page of a recent BUYER'S GUIDE. And here I thought I was privy to an exciting secret! Ah well, a secret no more, but still exciting news: the new "Famous Detective" pin-up by Frank Miller in MS. TREE #3 will feature Nancy Drew! Now, perhaps this means little to you, but for someone who grew up feverishly devouring NANCY DREW books, I will be just thrilled to see Miller's interpretation of Carolyn Keene's popular teen-age female sleuth!

Mid-summer should see the release of AZTEC ACE #1, written by Doug Moench, pencilled by Mike Hernandez, and edited by Catherine Yronwode. The series features a time traveller from the far future with a penchant for Fritos (!) who teams up with an American woman from 1940 to outwit the sinister Ebonati Brotherhood. Preview artwork for the series is stunning--no surprise to those who have already been favourably impressed by Hernandez' beautiful work on DC's "Huntress".



(C) First Comics, Inc.



(C) Marvel Comics Group

Canada's Prime Minister

FIRST COMICS

E-MAN co-creator and penciller Joe Staton will be writing the comic as well. Staton will be plotting and writing E-MAN #9, on sale in August, and #12, on sale in November. Staton's first E-MAN story will introduce a new character, Tyger Lili, "a villainess in the classic comics femme fatale vein." For more on Joe Staton, check out the interview with E-MAN's co-creator, penciller, and now writer, in this issue of the WIRE.

GRIMJACK, an eight-page continuing action feature, will begin as back-up in STARSLAYER #10. Written by John Ostrander and pencilled and inked by First Comics newcomer, Timothy Truman, GRIMJACK chronicles the adventures of John Gaunt, a combination hard-boiled detective and intergalactic warrior, an inter-dimensional adventurer, a weapons and martial arts expert, and even something of a magician! Look for GRIMJACK's debut in July.

MARVEL COMICS

Reports confirm that Marvel's one-shot FUMETTI book will, indeed, contain a censored prelude featuring Stan Lee in the nude! Stan the Man will, however, discreetly cover his privates with a treasury-sized magazine--and I leave it to you to guess the title. (Hint: it sure as hell won't be THE MICRONAUTS!)

And while Stan is doing his Burt Reynolds schtick, Canadian ex-patriot John Byrne will feature that country's Prime Minister, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, appearing in the pages of ALPHA FLIGHT #3.

A couple of artistic shuffles are taking place at Marvel. First of all, Steve Leialoha will no longer be involved with COYOTE after issue #2. Butch Guice will apparently be filling in on issue #3, although no regular artist has yet been slated to take over the series. Leialoha will draw one issue of DR. STRANGE while



Cover art (C) Joe Kubert

Dan Green drops the series to devote his time to a graphic novel featuring the mystic mage. Paul Smith will then become the permanent series penciller on DR. STRANGE, dropping the art chores on X-MEN with the anniversary issue of the title (X-MEN #175). Smith leaves quite a legacy on the book, however, especially with the introduction of the Newwave/Punk Storm in X-MEN #173. Issue #176 will be pencilled by John Romita Jr. who will be taking over as regular X-MEN artist.

Tom DeFalco, editor of Marvel's Spider-Man titles, has been promoted to Executive Editor and will produce the company's new line of comics aimed at younger readers. This follows on the news that Marvel has offered to buy out the inactive Harvey Comics line, which includes such characters as Richie Rich and Casper the Friendly Ghost. Good news for the children's market, which has been somewhat neglected these past few years.

In line with this new direction, Louise Jones is planning a new series, tentatively entitled THE POWER PACK, which she will write, June Brigman will draw, and Carl Potts will edit. The series will feature a group of four kids, two boys and two girls, from five to 11 years of age, who are given powers by aliens to save the Earth from a dastardly machine! Weezie sees the title as "primarily a book for kids that could function on the adult level." Though no release date has yet been set, the book is slated to appear on a monthly basis as part of the regular Marvel line.

PACIFIC COMICS

Pacific plans to release four new titles this summer. June will see the first issue of SOMERSET HOLMES, a bi-monthly series written by Bruce Jones, drawn by Brent Anderson, and edited by April Campbell. The new series promises mystery, intrigue, and action as, in the first issue, we meet a woman who finds herself

beaten and dazed, without a clue as to who she is!

June will also see the release of QUEST...AND OTHER TALES, a collection of some of Jeff Jones' finest work, reprinted from the Warren magazines in which it originally appeared, and presented for the first time in colour. The colouring is being done by Steve Oliff, who is taking complete advantage of the full-process separation method.

BOLD ADVENTURE is a new series focusing on fast-paced adventure, scheduled for bi-monthly release beginning in July. The first issue will feature three stories by Bill DuBay, illustrated by Rudy Nebres, John Severin, and Trevor von Eeden respectively.

Pacific also demonstrates its commitment to new talent in the field of comic art with the one-shot July release of THE JOE KUBERT SCHOOL PRESENTS: 1st FOLIO. Kubert himself will contribute a cover as well as a two-page interior comic story and introduction, framing a fine and eclectic selection of work by current students at the Kubert School.



Paul Smith's New Storm

(C) Marvel Comics Group

STARLOG/COMICS SCENE

STARLOG #72, on sale in June, celebrates the magazine's 7th anniversary with 96 pages of colour-filled fun! Mark Hamill discusses RETURN OF THE JEDI while Ray Bradbury comments on the writing of SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. Issue #73 focuses on SUPERMAN III with exclusive photos and a talk with screenwriters David and Leslie Newman.

Meanwhile, Bob Greenberger is editing the SUPERMAN POSTER MAGAZINE, which will have 10 fold-out posters—seven from SUPERMAN III, one each from SUPERMAN THE MOVIE and SUPERMAN II, and one from ACTION COMICS #1. Editorial material will discuss the making of the film and the legend of Superman, with bios on some of the movie's principal actors.

COMICS SCENE #11, due out in July, will showcase more of SUPERMAN III, the first of a two-part article featuring



Cover art (C) Rudy Nebres

Chris Claremont on mutants, sex, and violence (!), and a discussion on the long-lost but not forgotten romance genre of comics.

Editor Greenberger has also announced the hiring of Patrick Daniel O'Neill as Managing Editor of COMICS SCENE. O'Neill, who will also serve as Associate Editor to STARLOG, joins the magazine after a successful career as a freelance writer in the comics field, with articles in MARVEL AGE and COMICS SCENE already to his credit.

STAR*REACH

In what has to be described as a major coup, Star*Reach President Mike Friedrich has successfully negotiated a contract between Steve Gerber, Val Mayerik, and Marvel Comics, resulting in a new Epic Comics series, VOID INDIGO, written by Gerber and pencilled by Mayerik. The new series will be introduced as a 48-page Marvel Graphic Novel, tentatively scheduled for release in late 1983.

Friedrich has also signed a contract with Quality Communications of London to represent WARRIOR in the U.S. Friedrich's plan is to offer WARRIOR's "Pressbutton" and "Marvelman" series to U.S. firms, repackaging the black-and-white British material in colour, "probably as Baxter books."

WaRP GRAPHICS

ELFQUEST #16 will be shipping in June. This issue marks the introduction of WaRP Graphics' first foray into the publication of another title. "A Distant Soil", a science-fantasy plotted and drawn by Colleen Doran and scripted and edited by Richard Pini, debuts in an eight-page center insert in ELFQUEST #16. The story revolves around an eclectic group of characters, some of whom come from Earth, some of whom come from a far-distant star system, and one of whom comes from the mythical land of Avalon. The first issue of A DISTANT SOIL as its own magazine (in the ELFQUEST format) will be released in November.



The major characters from A DISTANT SOIL

Artwork (C) Colleen Doran

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This book was prematurely announced as a 1982 release. Now firmly scheduled for June 1983.

FROM KITCHEN SINK PRESS

TRINA'S WOMEN

by TRINA ROBBINS

MOIRA BERTRAM

The short history of Australian comics includes a surprising number of women, starting with Cecilia May Gibbs who wrote and drew comics from 1913 until her death in 1969. Of them all, Moira Bertram was probably the youngest when she started selling her work to Australian comic book publishers in 1945, at the age of fourteen.

Bertram writes, "I told the publishers I was sixteen for fear they wouldn't publish them (her comics)." On all her early comics she was assisted by her sister Kathleen, who did the layouts and the distinctive lettering. "I said 'Someone will have to do all this lettering.' 'I daren't,' (her sister) said. But she did."



(C) Moira Bertram

Moira Bertram's later work: a love comic from about 1960

Kathleen Bertram's lettering adds a personal touch to Moira Bertram's early work and goes well with the art style of the talented teenager. Knowing Bertram's age when she did these stories explains the energy, enthusiasm, and naive charm to be found in them, but the artwork is polished enough to have been done by someone twice her age. However, Bertram's work became slicker and more polished as the years went by. In the '50s and '60s she was doing love comics and Korean war stories as sophisticated as anything coming out of America.

After comics, Moira Bertram branched out into paperback book covers, and today she teaches art and paints portraits in the studio she shares with her sister. Writing about her current work, she says, "Strangely enough, none of this work enthalls me like the comic art and I am passionately addicted to it."

Ms. Bertram can be reached at: 9 Revilo Units, 1 Wood Street, Manly, New South Wales, 2095, Australia.

An example of Moira Bertram's early work, written and drawn when the artist was no more than 15, lettered by her sister Kathleen



(C) Moira Bertram

Information on Moira Bertram and every other female cartoonist can be found in **WOMEN AND THE COMICS**, by Trina Robbins and Cat Yronwode, to be published soon by Eclipse Enterprises. Look for it!

FIRST with E-MAN: JOE STATON

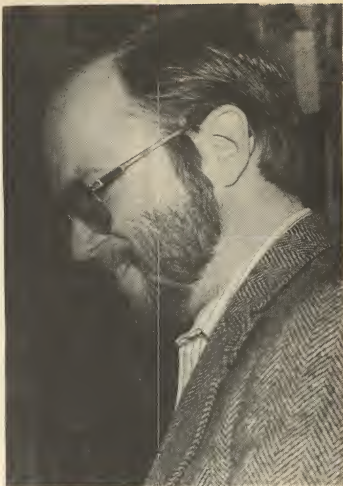


Photo (C) Clay Geerdes

JOE STATON

Joe Staton is truly one of the industry's nice guys and a versatile artist whose engaging work merits its wide appeal.

After a prominent stint at Charlton Comics in the early '70s where he co-created E-MAN, a whimsical parody of the superhero genre, Staton briefly joined the Marvel ranks, adding his polished inks to such long-running titles as AVENGERS and HULK. He soon left Marvel for DC where he was given the opportunity to exercise his wide-ranging talents on a number of DC's most popular characters, including The Legion of Super-Heroes, Green Lantern, and Batman, among others, as well as The Huntress and The Omega Men, both of which he co-created.

Now, more than 10 years after breaking into comics, Staton has returned to his first series and E-MAN is alive and well once again, having been resurrected by the Chicago-based First Comics, for which Staton also serves as the line's art director.

I spent a rainy Saturday with Joe towards the end of his west coast tour last February. After a long afternoon at our Palo Alto store, where Joe worked overtime to accommodate all the fans with autographs and sketches, and after trudging through the rain for a late dinner, Joe graciously consented to the following interview. I'd

like to thank him for taking the time and effort to make this interview possible and for contributing his delightful cover illustration to this issue of the WIRE.

This interview was conducted by yours truly, transcribed by the ever-faithful Matt Denn, copy-edited by Joe Staton, with final edits by --

-- Diana Schutz

DIANA: My first question is what your feelings are as regards the new E-Man versus the original one. Do you still see him as being sort of the innocent that he was back in his Charlton days?

JOE: I don't think any of us are as innocent as we were in those days, and it would be hard to deal with E-Man in quite the same way, too. The first version, at least from the drawing end, was done by somebody who was bright and new and enthusiastic and hadn't been around the block, and (with) the current version of it, the drawing and writing are a bit more tempered. So I think, as opposed to being naive, as E-Man may have been the first time, the situation now is more that he's someone who speaks the wrong language and

doesn't know the social customs. It's like he's recently off the boat: he's not lacking in understanding, but he doesn't quite have all the signals down. So he's certainly not a *bon vivant* or a man about town, but...just the thinking is a little more tempered on how the character is in terms of his situation.

DIANA: In terms of continuity, then, does the First Comics E-MAN pick up where the Charlton version left off, or has there been a certain period of time between both incarnations?

JOE: There's been a very indefinite lapse of time. Some time's taken place, but a lot less than there has been between Charlton's E-MAN #10 and First's E-MAN #1. I think at some point in one of the stories, we refer to something in the first run as having happened "several months ago" or something like that. I would say that there's probably a lapse of a year or so-- something like that.

DIANA: How did you come about doing E-MAN again?

JOE: Well, I had moved to Chicago to work for First, and at that point there were no plans to do E-MAN, but as we were lining up the schedule and figuring out just what to do, it did seem like the most obvious course. I was involved with First and the thing I was most closely identified with was E-MAN. It really seemed kind of silly not to take a shot at it-- not to try to get the character back and give him another go. I had other ideas that I was willing to try, but there was nothing that was readily identifiable.

DIANA: What prompted the X-MEN parody?

JOE: Well, again--

DIANA: You can be nasty! (Laughter)

JOE: Actually, there was no real nastiness in the motivation. It's just that since we were doing a book with something of a satirical slant, and our market is strictly the direct sales, again it's the sort of situation where it would be silly not to do it. X-MEN is the best selling book: everybody knows the X-Men. There are certain excesses in the books that lend themselves very readily to satire. It was a natural. Basically, it was the course of least resistance.

DIANA: Do you think that there's a danger in concentrating on industry-related satire, or do you think that the direct sales market will cover for that?

JOE: We're aware that there may be a danger in concentrating too specifically on certain things, but we think if we mix that in with different sorts of stories as we go along, then certainly the direct sales will respond to satires that possibly it alone

can pick up on: the X-Men, (then) we're doing Mylar Snugs, the Ultimate Collector, down the line we're doing our combination satire of ELFQUEST and the Smurfs which is called "Barfquest"--about cute little green elf people who run around on sheepdogs! But in amongst that we're mixing in some more or less straightforward superhero stories, in which E-MAN fights villains from space and the like, except he does it in his own way, which is kind of funny. Anything he does with his shape-shifting is not going to be quite normal. But they're going to be fairly straightforward stories. Of course, he battles more generalized satire-type villains also: certainly Jerry Falwell as an object of satire would be accessible, if not acceptable, in terms of a larger market. So we're really kind of mixing things up. We don't want to be pinned down to any one approach, but we don't want to lock ourselves out of any specifics on that approach either.

DIANA: Have you gotten any flak from the industry for what you've done so far?

JOE: Well, a little bit. As I mentioned, John Byrne loved it, but I did go out of my way to draw John cute, so that's okay. I understand Chris (Claremont) had some objections to Dr. Ford Fairmont referring to himself as a scum-sucking maggot--

DIANA: You're telling me!

JOE: (Laughs) So there has been some flak, but nothing I intend to take seriously.

DIANA: Nothing that would prevent you from doing an encore.

JOE: If anything it would encourage us to do more at this stage! (Laughter)

DIANA: Okay, with regard to working with Marty Pasko: you've collaborated with him before, on

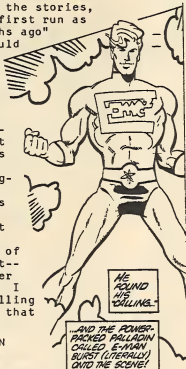
PLASTIC MAN--

JOE: Yeah, I've worked with Marty several times: on METAL MEN, PLASTIC MAN, and at least one or two SUPERMAN stories. So I've worked with him several different times.

DIANA: How do you mesh on E-MAN, given that as you said earlier, the character is more closely identified with you--he's yours much more than he is Marty's?

JOE: Right--he was created by me and Nick Cuti. Well, you know, Marty is a person without fear: he walked into SWAMP THING following Len Wein, and E-MAN is another cult figure, so he walks into E-MAN following Nick. Marty just tries to understand the characters on his own terms and deal with them on that basis, rather than doing a pastiche of what someone else has done before.

DIANA: Are you still working full script? Issue #1 was done full script--



JOE: Issue #1 was done full script: 27 pages of comics and a 101-page script! It was a very tightly detailed script. We've worked several different ways since then, and the approach we're taking now is Marty's doing a fairly tight plot and I'm doing breakdowns, and he's dialoguing from that.

DIANA: In other words, the so-called "Marvel" style.

JOE: Right, except that Marty's plots are very tight, as plots go in the business today. He doesn't give you six pages of plot and then say "Fill in the fight;" there's an actual story for all the pages involved. It's harder to write satire, comedy, or anything with a light touch and leave it that open, so it has to be paced a little more tightly.

DIANA: I'm assuming, though, that a lot of the background jokes are yours. I noticed, for example, the carry-over from the original E-MAN to the current series with the newspaper headlines--

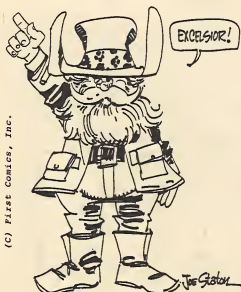
JOE: That's coming from both of us. Marty, for example, is responsible for the "Honk if you love Jesus" sequence--

DIANA: Oh yes, the bumper stickers--

JOE: --"Honk if you are Jesus," or whatever it was, that was in the first issue, and I'm throwing in things like "Squirrel Muggings on the Rise, Chipmunks Sought." We're both getting into it, and in fact, some of the background jokes came from Doug Rice, who was doing some backgrounds for me and just shoved things into the background as well. And occasionally the pages will be out and Bruce Patterson will come by and think of something to go in. So it's a community effort.

DIANA: On to Nova, who's one of my favorite women--

JOE: Mine, too.



Ford Fairmont himself!

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DIANA: Rumour has it that she's going to lose her super-powers--she's going to lose her status as an energy being and become a regular old human.

JOE: Right. That happened in #3 when she crawled into the mutant energizer at the end of the "Dark Albatross" story. So she's lost her powers.

DIANA: Oh, was that made evident in #3? I didn't really pick up on that; I saw what happened to her, but I didn't realize she was--

JOE: I don't think it's really explained until the following story, but that's where it happens.

DIANA: So why did you decide to do that?

JOE: It was just a matter of the contrast in the characters. You lost a lot of the contrast if you had two characters who basically could do the same thing, and my feeling has always been that E-Man is extremely powerful, but he doesn't really understand situations, so that although he can do anything, he may not know what to do, but that Nova is extremely aware. She's a grown-up human being, so she doesn't really need super-powers. You lose that contrast if she's also a super-powered person. It was basically a matter of getting back to some counterpoint that led to her de-superfying--whatever. (Laughter)

DIANA: She had never been portrayed as being very comfortable with her powers anyway.

JOE: Right. She has never quite come to terms with what she really thought was a loss of humanity: becoming a super-heroine.

DIANA: What happened to her romantic infatuation with Alec Ironn? At the end of the first run of E-MAN, there was the Al Capp parody--

JOE: Where she was jealous.

DIANA: --and then all of a sudden she's making it with Rodney (in E-MAN #1) and wanting Alec to take off.

JOE: This is where Nova and E-Man are having serious doubts about the possibility of "permanent pair-bonding"--she being a nice healthy girl and he being a creature from outer space. He thinks it might be nice if she dated people of her own species, but, on the other hand, he's really wiped out that she does it. We're just exploring their relationship a little bit more. There's still plenty of attachment between them.

DIANA: Good. More romance!

JOE: Oh yeah--and who knows what kind of a social life Teddy has?!

DIANA: Are you planning to explore that as well?!

JOE: Oh, yeah. We're going to get into all of the weird and perverted...you have no idea how many black-leathered koala bears there are!

DIANA: Well, while you're on the subject, let me ask you what I asked Steves Englehart and Lelaioha the other night: Given that you're doing this non-Code book which allows you a lot more freedom, but also given that it's on the racks with the regular 60¢ Code comics and therefore gets sold to kids, do you think that there is a reason to tone down the sexual element in the book?

JOE: Well, we've never really been explicit in terms of sex.

DIANA: No, I grant you. But with the non-Code four-colours in general?

JOE: Oh, in general. I think we'll probably have to move to some sort of grading system like the movies do. I think there's an older audience that would really be offended if the books were suddenly as bland again as everything was under the Code for so long, but certainly the individual dealers can't really be expected to check through every book that comes in and make sure there's nothing in it that will offend a little kid's mother or something.

DIANA: A dealer should know everything about every book that comes in!!!

JOE: That's a good ideal. I think we should have some kind of code that the dealer can read to realize what a kid is picking up. We really should be serving a large spectrum of older readers and younger readers without cutting off either end—directing some books to one or the other. But I don't see homogenizing all the books again as being a good solution to that.

DIANA: I agree, and E-MAN certainly hasn't crossed the bounds of tastefulness. But there have been suggestions, and what I wonder specifically, then, is how far you might push it?

JOE: In terms of suggestion, I think we push things pretty far. In terms of explicitness...as much as I hate to admit it, I do have inborn or intrained levels of taste as far as comics go. Sometimes I try to make my motto "Let neither good taste nor good sense stand in your way!" but there are times when I'll draw the line and simply not draw something, whether it would fit into the script or not. I've toned down certain scenes of E-Man and Nova just in terms of suggestive foreplay and the like that's handled perfectly well in the dialogue without the art getting excessively explicit.

DIANA: Are you no longer going to be inking the book? I thought I heard you mention that today.

JOE: That's right. Rick Burchett, who did the Michael Mauser story in CHARLTON BULLS-EYE a while back and did a Mauser back-up



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in E-MAN #4 is going to be taking over inking the book.

DIANA: On a permanent basis?

JOE: Yeah. It's not something I'm doing lightly: I'm very attached to the book, and I certainly would never turn the inking over to the "warm body" school of inking, but since Rick is a grown-up—he's an advertising director in St. Louis—he's come to the book from the outside simply from a sense of sympathy with the characters and sympathy with the style of drawing. I really feel a kinship with the way he works. We've had him up to Chicago and talked to him and just generally gotten a good feeling about him. It's not something I would do without thinking about it—turning the inking over to someone else—but I do feel secure in turning it over to Rick.

DIANA: Is it time constraints that have led you to give up the inking?

JOE: Right. It's mainly just the art director job at First has turned out to take a great deal more time than I had ever planned on, and if I don't farm out some of the work, I find myself taking shortcuts in terms of both E-MAN and the staff work. It's just a matter of structuring my time so that I can put in time pencilling the book and just concentrate on pacing the gags and working things in the backgrounds and stuff, without finding myself in a situation of battling out the material and just going through the motions on the staff work.

DIANA: Can you tell me a little about your job as art director? What do you do?

JOE: (Laughs) Well, after a year on the job, I'm still trying to figure that out! At this point, we have a fairly limited production department. Bruce Patterson's in charge of that, but I have to help out on production as well: things will come in



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Nova and Alec discuss "permanent pair-bonding"



Photo (C) Clay Geerdes

Comics & Comix publicist Tom Walton with Joe Staton at the Staton autograph party in Berkeley

that have to be pasted up at the last minute, and the like. I spend quite a bit of time on the phone with people arranging jobs to be done or seeing that jobs are coming in or talking with someone about how something has to be done. I've been out to New Jersey to talk to the colour separators. Basically I've just been having a real fast on-the-job training course on how you put comic books together, and finding out there are a lot of things to keep juggled all at once. Also, we have programs with posters, we have ads that have to go out--those have to be designed.

DIANA: Do you design them *per se*, or do you supervise the design?

JOE: Both. Sometimes I will design the ad myself and arrange for type to be set or lettering to be done, sometimes Bruce Patterson will actually do the layout or the drawing for an ad and I'll just check with him as he goes along. Sometimes Doug Rice, our production assistant, will be putting things together, and at that point it becomes strictly supervisory--just finding out that everything is getting done. Even at that, there's a lot to keep up with.

DIANA: Given your hectic schedule--I was curious to know if you might be picking up any other titles--but I assume at this point you're sort of too swamped to do something else. Is there other stuff that

you'd like to be doing?

JOE: In terms of me drawing?

DIANA: Yes.

JOE: Oh yeah. I have a pretty well-developed proposal that I had into First before we decided to pick up E-MAN, and that's a tentative project for down the line, whenever I get my time organized enough that I can actually think about doing something additional. And of course now that I'm on the job and seeing what can be done in terms of production work and seeing how a decent comic book can be put together, I get more ideas all the time--just wanting to try things out. I figure somewhere down the line I will be doing other things as well.

DIANA: Does First have any plans for a title featuring a woman as the lead character?

JOE: This isn't definite, because until we announce things they aren't really definite, but I think we'll probably have a title somewhere along the line featuring Sargon and Valaria as the two lead characters from WARP. Sargon is 35,000 years old, and there's an enormous back story explaining what happened in WARP. So you have 35,000 years of time to fill in, so we'll probably go back and work up, in the Sargon and Valaria title. They're very good characters, and I think it would be a

shame to waste them.

DIANA: But nothing really definite at this point?

JOE: Nothing really definite right now. I should point out that a book we're going to be doing, MARS, by Marc Hempel and Mark Wheatley, who have done a lot of work for HEAVY METAL and EPIC--the primary character in MARS is Morgana Trace, who is a female astronaut/scientist and a paraplegic who has developed her own system of bionic supports. She's an interesting character! (Laughter)

DIANA: She sounds it! Nothing straight for First--everything slightly off-the-wall!

JOE: Count on us to be slightly askew.

DIANA: So when will we see the book? The first issue?

JOE: Early fall.

DIANA: You've primarily worked for Charlton, DC, and now First, and you did do some work for Marvel--

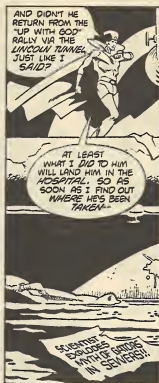
JOE: Right. I inked AVENGERS and THE HULK and did some work for Marvel's black-and-white books.

DIANA: Given that the majority of your work has been published elsewhere, I'm wondering if there's something about Marvel that doesn't appeal to you, either in terms of the company or in terms of their characters--and if you don't want to answer you don't have to! (Laughter)

JOE: When I left Marvel originally, it was because it was very hard for me to get pencilling there. I was known strictly as a humour person from having done E-MAN, and unlike Marvel, DC was willing to give me some pencilling, but at that point there were really no hard feelings between me and Marvel. Archie (Goodwin) was the editor, John Verpoorten was running

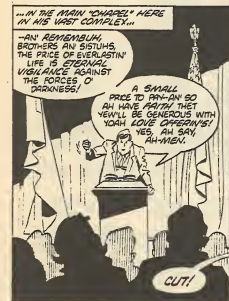


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Station playing with headlines



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things and I liked working with him. In any case, since I've started working at First, I've realized that I really don't think I could work with Jim Shooter. It's very obvious that Jim likes to be surrounded by people who agree with him on what makes a comic, and I've been looking at a lot of portfolios, and people will show me things, and I'll say "This is good but your layouts are dull," or "Why did you do this? You made this page dull," and they'll say "Well, I showed this to Jim last year and he told me to make these changes." So, basically the kind of comic books I'm trying to get out at First are a very different kind of comics than what Jim must put out at Marvel. As you said, we're trying to put out something that can be depended on to be different. At this point, I'm really developing an idea of what I think makes a good comic book, and it's not what Jim thinks does. There are still characters that I'd love to do at Marvel, but I don't see where there'd ever be any situation where I'd be doing them.

DIANA: Just to backtrack for a minute, you mentioned that you had looked at people's artwork. Is that also officially part of your job as art director?

JOE: Yeah, it's part of my job description. We try to look at everything that comes in. If it comes in through the mail, everything piles up on my desk, and I try to take a day a month, and sometimes it takes more than a day, because I try to write everybody a letter and try to explain a little bit of what my reaction was. And people in town call up and make appointments and come in and show me their stuff.

DIANA: So First is definitely open to new talent?

JOE: We're open, even though we don't actively encourage it. We do run across new people who are not established who are very good--and certainly Lenin Delsol, who is going to be pencilling STARSLAYER, and Rick Burchett and Timothy Truman are not really established in the business, but they're really good, and in terms of what we're doing there's a place for them.

DIANA: Tell me something about The Huntress, because she is definitely one of the best women in comics today and I'd like to know ...well, you co-created the character, although earlier today I think you said that she basically was Paul Levitz'.

JOE: Most of the initial thinking was actually from Paul: the situations, the actual origin of the character. I designed her, and as I did the strip for a long time, I tried to give that strip a different design look than anything else I did: there were larger, more designy blacks--basically she did inhabit a slightly different world than anything else I was doing, and as far as I could tell, than anything else DC was doing.

DIANA: Well, she carried the WONDER WOMAN book in terms of sales for a long time. I don't know if DC is aware of that, but that's the case.

JOE: I don't know. I would think they would be, but I don't know. I know DC got a lot of letters asking for a Huntress mini-series or something like that. It was one of the things that was always mentioned and nothing was ever done with it.

DIANA: How did you feel about leaving her behind when you left DC? Were you close to the character the way that you're close to E-MAN?

JOE: Yeah. It was a character I'd lived with for a long time, and still understand a good deal better than anyone else who's going to do it. She was the last regular thing I gave up at DC. It was only after Paul Levitz gave up writing her that...it was still fun while he was writing it, and after Joey Cavallieri was writing it, it wasn't fun anymore. I was real attached to the character, but I had to give it up. I'm still attached to the character. If

they ever decide to do a mini-series, it would make me real uncomfortable to see anyone else doing it.

DIANA: I guess, given your responsibilities at First, that you couldn't just sort of freelance out that mini-series?

JOE: Technically, there are no restrictions on what I do for anybody, but I probably wouldn't be able to in terms of time.

DIANA: It sounds from talking to you that comics are basically what you want to be doing. Do you see yourself moving into other forms of art or is telling stories pretty much what you want to do?

JOE: I think the thing is doing something with characters, whether it's with stories or anecdotal sorts of drawings...even if it's abstract material with sympathetic shapes, you can do that, too. It's not so much, these days, that I'm really attached to the storytelling element; it's that element of sympathy--trying to work with art that I'm sympathetic with.

DIANA: Okay, one last question. Now that your west coast tour is just about over, how do you feel after having been inundated by fans all through this past week?

JOE: Basically I feel pretty good about it--about the company and E-MAN both. It's not unless you do get out into the stores and talk to people and see how things are going that you get any kind of feeling at all for how your book's being received or how your company's being received. You know what the distributors are ordering, but you don't know if people actually like the book. In the last few days, I've gotten the feeling that people actually like what we're doing, and they're taking what we do seriously. I think those are the two main things I'm looking for.

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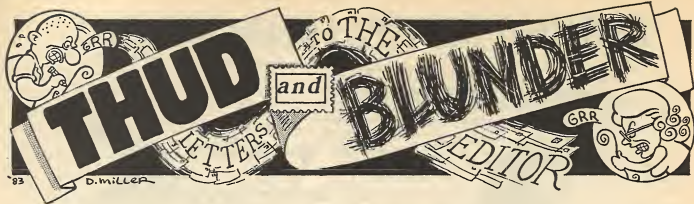
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Thanks for the latest TELEGRAPH WIRE. As usual, it's a pleasure to read, and lots of fun looking at the column headings.

I found the interview with my friends, Steve and Steve, about COYOTE to be interesting. I read the first issue a few days ago and think they both did a marvelous job.

I would like to correct a point made in that interview, however. The point relates to the shift of the Coyote feature from Eclipse to Marvel.

To set the record straight, Steve E.'s contention that Eclipse "couldn't" match Marvel's offer, and that it was "mostly money," is patently false. I think if Steve were to reread the transcript, he'd see the error. What actually occurred had nothing to do with money. Marvel's money offers are no more than Eclipse's, and in fact, it is generally acknowledged that Marvel's "Epic" deal was a reaction to the prior deals offered by Eclipse and Pacific Comics.

Why did Coyote go to Marvel? Simply because neither we nor Marshall Rogers were interested in doing a sequel. Steve E. asked Marshall, and asked us, and we both waived our contractual rights, allowing Steve to make a deal with Steve Leialoha and Cadence Industries.

In the meantime, we've got SUNDANCER by Steve (Englehart) and Marshall in the planning stages, as well as a collection of the first "Coyote" story which appeared in ECLIPSE #2-8. And if I can stick in a plug for another of Marshall's creations, The Foozle, our favorite bird-creature is teamed with Cap'n Quick in his new series appearing in ECLIPSE MONTHLY.

I'm glad I've been able to set the record straight.

Best to you!

Dean Mullaney
Columbia, MO

Thanks for taking the time to clarify matters, Dean. And glad to hear you enjoyed the newly-revamped WIRE. We're working hard to give all opinions and inclinations equal time. Maybe one of these fine days, I'll get a chance to interview you and give your typing fingers a rest!

Well! Your issue #8 was a good read! Keep up the good work!

I have one thought to share with you about the long-range future of the comics industry. I began thinking about this when a small boy was over at our place--his dad was visiting me--and my wife showed him some of our comics. It rapidly became apparent to us (we are 28 years old) that none of the comics we buy are appropriate for kids. Further, none of the comics that we see from Marvel or DC these days seem to me to be capable of engendering an appreciation of the comics medium in the very young.

Some people say that comics are maturing. True. But I feel that inadequate effort is being made industry-wide to ensure continued readership 20 to 30 years down the road. My wife commented that the "baby boom" generation and their children are being followed by a comics industry intent on maximizing sales, allowing the youth market to survive on STAR WARS comics (movie tie-in) or toy tie-in comics. Drek. Comics for the young seem to be disappearing along with Gold Key.

Perhaps TV is too powerful a medium to contend with--I hope not--let's see more real comics for kids!

David Gibbons
Sacramento, CA

Point well taken, David, but there does seem to be some good news in the offing. Check out what John Barrett, COMICS & COMIX head honcho, has to say in his publisher's column. Not only is Marvel actively pursuing the children's market with their possible take-over of the Harvey line, but Whitman comics are back on the stands after a six-month hiatus and duck fans (young and old) are back in business! Archie plans to release a KATY KEENE reprint book sometime soon--a bright light for an even more neglected market: little girls (and not-so-little girls!). And, last but not far from least, Arn Saba's NEIL THE HORSE is a must for all ages.

Any controversies brewing??? Then write! Send your letters to: THE TELEGRAPH WIRE, 2461 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley, CA, 94704.

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NAME :
ADDRESS :

TALE

STORY: TALENTED
 ART: D. CAVEN
 EDITOR: S. HOWER
 PUBLISHER: S. HOWER

THE WONDER SLUG

(C) Rollase Productions

OUR TALE OPENS JUST
 OUTSIDE BETTER SCIENCE
 LABS ...

NO TALENTED
 NO TALENTED
 NO TALENTED

MUNCH
 MUNCH
 MUNCH

WHERE A SLUG INNOCENTLY LUNCHES ON
 SOME ROSES.

MUNCH
 MUNCH
 MUNCH

SUDDENLY

38-705
 10-10-10

WHAT? WHO...?

0 0

ALL AT ONCE, LIGHTS FLASH ALL AROUND
 OUR HERO AND HE PLUNGES INTO DARKNESS

TALE

YIPE!

WITH THE DAWN COMES A
 RETURN TO NORMALCY
 ... OR DOES IT?

HEY LOOK AT ME! I
 ACTUALLY FEEL ALRIGHT!

WHY AM I
 TALKING?

I'M OKAY!

I SURVIVED!

THINGS
 LOOK GREAT!

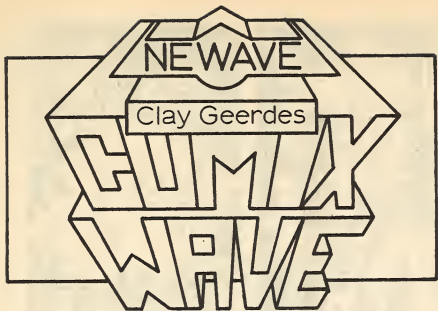
WHO CARES? LET'S EAT!

HOW ABOUT SOME NICE ...

UH... ROSES...

GOPE!

TO BE CONTINUED...



THE RETURN OF WERTHAMISM

Think we're in for another round of Werthamism? What's that, you say? Censorship, that's what. Well, you say, I'm not for that. But perhaps you are. I think a person's stand on censorship depends a lot on age, social role, parent-hood, and a number of semi or unconscious factors. It would be hard to find, in a civilised culture, a person who didn't practice some form of *a priori* censorship in some area. Invariably, when the topic is discussed, children enter as a major focus. "Sure, I think it's fine for adults to read or see things like that, but I wouldn't want my kids..." Fred Wertham's line in the late '40s was just that child-oriented routine. Kids were becoming delinquent and rebellious and kids were reading comics, ergo, comics were a main cause of juvenile delinquency. Well, anyone with any background in psychology will argue that the home and family are more likely to contain the roots of delinquent behavior rather than anything extrinsic; i.e. comics, television, library books. But Wertham was on the PTA lecture circuit and, like his contemporary counterparts (Falwell, et al), he made a lot of bucks using comics as a scapegoat to get wayward parents off the hook.

Censorship always involves politics. If you read a lot about pornography in the newspaper and how this or that politician is going to put an end to it, "to protect our fair children from the influence of this filth and degradation," you know it's election time. The rest of the time you hear very little about pornography one way or another. It's there. Some people buy it and read it. Others ignore it. No big deal. No, whenever you hear about large scale anti-pornography campaigns, something else is going on. Those Southern ministers who are so hot to break up and burn Beatles and Kiss records have an ax to grind—those

neo-punk teenagers aren't going to their churches and buying their particular brand of the Gospel. Must be some reason. Must be some demonic message in the lyrics of the rock songs. Now I know, and so do you, that Falwell and his cronies would be out burning comic books too, but comics haven't one-hundredth the audience the rockstars have. That's why there has never been much evangelistic fervor wasted on underground comics. In most areas of the country, people have never seen a Zap or Freak Brothers comic. Teenagers everywhere went bazonkers over Elvis Presley's rubber legs and the evangelists have been after rock and roll ever since!

I'm personally disturbed by censorship in any form, but that which worries me most is *a priori* censorship, the kind exercised by the corporate media and other institutionalized powers. We're supposed to have freedom of choice in this country; well, that presupposes we know what choices exist; when only certain brands, certain ideas, appear in the media (TV, newspapers, pop magazines, comics), my freedom of choice is gone, never really existed. Someone else is deciding what I will or won't see or read just as my parents decided what I would eat when I was a little kid at the dinner table. I reject this child-oriented viewpoint. I'm an adult and fully capable of making my own decisions. I don't want any editor or newscaster deciding this or that shouldn't appear because some child might see it. This means I live my life controlled by that projected child. No way. Certainly, there are numerous books, photographs, cartoons, that shouldn't be shown to children; who would argue this point? But when the child comes up in such deliberation, it is the adult who is going to be denied freedom of choice.

Most discussions of censorship dwell upon sex and violence. Should children be exposed to sex and violence in the media? Volumes of sociological and psychological ruminations have been published on this subject, but there is still no agreement one way or another as to whether exposure to media violence and sex leads to serious behavior problems among children. If you have a child who is violent, it's easy to point a finger at television or comics and evade the fact that something in the child's home or school environment has triggered that violence. It's not your drinking, your negligence, your social attitudes that have created a violent child—It's those trashy comic books! Yeah! It's not your attitudes re sex; it's those trashy comic books!

A woman went into a local Berkeley comic book store one afternoon and bawled out the clerk for selling her son a comic book which contained a "love scene". Now,

this particular comic was not pornographic and the love scene showed no genitalia; it was just part of a longer story. What effect do you suppose her action is going to have on her son? It's doubtful he placed much emphasis on the love scene when he read the comic, probably accepted it as there and went on with the story. Now he thinks there is something wrong with it. He has a conflict he didn't have before. He's not going to stop reading comic books. He'll just read them at a friend's house or in the store, but now he has to feel guilty about it. He has to worry about getting caught. If he has begun to be curious about sex, it has taken a negative turn, one which will affect his entire life, his attitude toward women, his ability to participate in sex with a woman. It's fine for his mother not to want him to read comics "like that", but this is nothing but a power trip on her part, an attempt to keep her boy a baby, to screen him against the adult world. Parental suppression leads to prolonged frustration which ultimately breaks out in some form of anti-social behavior--violence. It is no accident that physical aggression and random violence have become a part of the current teenage scene.

That mother did not comment on the many scenes of fantasy violence in the comic. Why not? Obviously, a young boy's budding sexuality is of more interest to a mother than his violent tendencies. Actually, the entire culture, being more and more sedentary, tends to accept the need for fantasy violence. Gore and bloodshed were very big during the era of McCarthyism, and with movies like *Conan*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Road Warrior*, we're seeing a pattern repeat itself. All of the poetry and comic which were attacked in the '60s and '70s dealt with love and sex. Police were outraged at Lenore Kandel's *Love Book* in 1965 because she talked lovingly of her husband's genitals and described their sex life together. Terrible! She was tried and acquitted, as was Allen Ginsberg five years before (the *Howl* trial of 1960). I've never heard of a single trial having to do with graphic or literary violence. Imagine a cop walking in and busting a store manager for selling *Ronin* or *X-Men*. You can't and neither can I. Whether psychologists accept the catharsis theory of violence or not, it's clear that American society does. Why, most parents would be considered downright unpatriotic if they didn't take their kids to see *The Empire Strikes Back*! And this is a film in which the hero gets his hand chopped off by the villain!

Rest assured the new censorship will not deal with violence. Sex will be the target. Let's get into the real reason adults want sex kept from their children. It's not the kids, it's the parents who can't deal with the questions and the discussions and the embarrassing curiosity. It's the mother who just isn't prepared to tell her son the details when he asks:

"What are they doing, Mom?" I remember the first time I came home from school and put the question to my mother. I was seven or eight. I asked her what the word meant. I had heard it from some boys on the school playground, folks; didn't read it in *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*. Did she sit me down and explain testes and ovaries? Hell, no! She wanted to know where I had heard "such dirty talk" and what kind of boys had I been hanging around. If I ever said that word around her again, she would wash my mouth out with soap! So much for that. It was back to the old drugstore paperback rack for me. If I was going to learn anything about sex, it would have to be from books. Now, some of you are going to tell me times have changed and things aren't like that anymore, particularly in liberal old Berkeley, but I suggest you do a little research before you put your foot in your mouth. I know a lot of swingers and hot tubbers who still clam up when they are faced with discussing sex with their children. The kids are just lucky to have a lot more information in print than was available to me as a boy in the '40s.

Today's kids can read Zap Comix. At least until the ghost of Fred Wertham comes along to spirit them away.

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NEWAVE LISTING

Bob Goblin, *The Hobgoblin 1 and 2* (.75¢ ea.)
 The Real McGees (.75¢)
 David Miller, P.O. Box 9634, Berkeley, CA, 94709. Send a couple of 20¢ stamps each to cover postage.

Too Twisted Tales 1 (\$1.50)
 Strange Time Tales (.75¢)
 Snapshots (.50¢)

Roldo, Toof-Arg-On Comix Worx, 1232 Downing St., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3E 2R7. Send Roldo about 50¢ per book to cover Canadian postage rates. No U.S. stamps please!

Lone Wolf 1 (\$1. pp.), 2 and 3 (.50¢ ea.)
 Too Tense Toons 1 and 2 (.50¢ ea.)
 George Kochell, 5432 Main St. #4, E. Petersburg, PA, 17520. Send a 20¢ stamp for each book or get all five for \$2.50 pp.

Intensely Bland Comix 1 (.50¢)
 Useless Lives (.50¢)
 I Got Dem Ole Blues (.50¢)
 Fil the Phrog (\$1.75)

Kalynn Campbell, 2436-A California St., Berkeley, CA, 94703. Send two 20¢ stamps for each book.

Imp Magazine 1 (\$2.50 pp.)

Eric Vincent, 2902 Renshaw, Houston, TX, 77023.

COMICS & COMIX CALENDAR

Saturday, May 21

Join "Mad-man" SERGIO ARAGONES, now chronicling the adventures of *Groo the Wanderer* for Pacific Comics, at our Palo Alto store, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Or catch ARAGONES later the same day at the Berkeley store, 4-6 p.m.

Sunday, May 22

SERGIO ARAGONES again, this time at our Citrus Heights location, 12-2 p.m. And from there, this delightful entertainer makes his last appearance of the week-end at our downtown Sacramento shop, 3-5 p.m.

Tuesday, May 24

You can help benefit the Children's Hospital Medical Center and be treated to a premiere showing of Lucasfilm's *RETURN OF THE JEDI* at the Piedmont Theatre in Oakland. Showtime is 8 p.m., and a champagne reception as well as a costume contest, sponsored by COMICS & COMIX, begin at 7 p.m. Get your advance ticket by mailing a check for \$25.00 to: Children's Hospital Branches, Inc., 5275 Claremont Ave., Oakland, CA, 94618.

Saturday, June 11

Join COMICS & COMIX as we begin a week-long party celebrating the opening of our brand new store at the SOLANO MALL in Fairfield.

To kick off the week's events, Rom inkers extraordinaire IAN AKIN and BRIAN GARVEY will be appearing at the new location in Solano Mall, 1-4 p.m.

In the meantime, BILL GRIFFITH, creator of the mad pataphysician *Zippy the Pinhead*, will appear at our Lombard St. store in San Francisco, accompanied by his three-foot Zippy doll, 1-3 p.m. This will mark the first official rally for the Zippy for President re-election campaign!

While Zippy is wondering if he's re-elected yet, Coyote creators STEVE ENGLEHART and STEVE LEIALOHA will be off and running at the downtown Sacramento store, 1-3 p.m.

And in Palo Alto, renowned colourist STEVE OLIFF and fantasy illustrator FRANK CIROCCO, new Marvel artist on *Alien Legion*, will be entertaining a legion of fans, 2-4 p.m.

Sunday, June 12

Our Berkeley store will host *WIMMEN'S DAY* with a fabulous female line-up of guests. Many of the *Last Gasp Wimmen's Comix* crew will be on hand for the party, including TRINA ROBBINS, LEE MARRS, MELINDA GEBBIE, TERE BINSWANGER, CARYN LESCHEN, DORI SEDA, SHARON RUDAH, PHEBE GLOECKNER, and KATHRYN LEMIEUX. Also appearing will be DALE MESSICK, noted Brenda Starr artist. Original art will be on display and for sale, and a 'jam' drawing by the guests will be raffled off. Join us, 1-4 p.m.

Sunday, June 12

AL GORDON, inker on DC's *Captain Carrot and Eclipse's DNAgents*, will be joined by fantasy illustrator KEN MACKLIN, whose "Dr. Watchstop" strip is one of the highlights of *Epic Magazine*, at our Irving St. store in San Francisco, 1-3 p.m. Meanwhile, our Citrus Heights store presents a Tribute to *Greyhaven* with special guest authors MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY, PAUL EDWIN ZIMMER, and DIANA PAXSON, 1-3 p.m.

Friday, June 17

Join us for the Official Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at our all-new, all-different store at the Solano Mall in Fairfield. A champagne reception will begin at 5 p.m. followed by the ribbon cutting at 5:30. Presiding over the event will be the Mayor of Fairfield, GARY FALATI, who will serve as Master of Ceremonies. Free refreshments and gifts for all our new Solano customers!

Saturday, June 18

More partying at our new Solano Mall store, with a grand prize drawing for a trip to Disneyland! In addition to a Celebrity Guest Host, x-altered *X-Men* scripter, CHRIS CLAREMONT, will be on hand to join in the x-travaganza. Entertainment will be provided by actress GRETCHEN LINDELOF and comedian DOUG FERRARI. An event not to be missed, 1-4 p.m.

Saturday, June 25

CREATION CONVENTION comes to the west coast with a fantastic show in Anaheim! Guests include BORIS VALLEJO, BIBI BESCH, CHRIS CLAREMONT, STEVE ENGLEHART, MARV WOLFMAN, and SF author DAVE BRIN. All events take place at the Sheraton Anaheim, 1015 West Ball Road, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. From 12:30 to 2 p.m. there will be a luncheon featuring at least one of the main guests. Admission to the luncheon is \$10.00.

Sunday, June 26

CREATION ANAHEIM continues with its great line-up of guests. For more information, call the toll-free Creation hotline: 800-645-6579.

Help Wanted

Applications being accepted for part/full-time positions in COMICS & COMIX' new Solano Mall store in Fairfield. Retail sales experience required. Background in comics, science fiction, and/or role games preferable. Contact Scott Maple at: 916-969-0717.

STEVE LEIALOHA

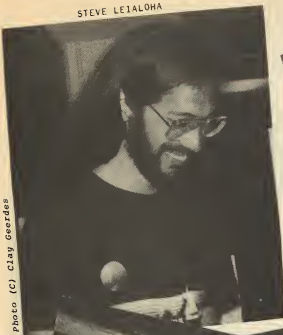


photo (C) Clay Geerdes

BILL GRIFFITH

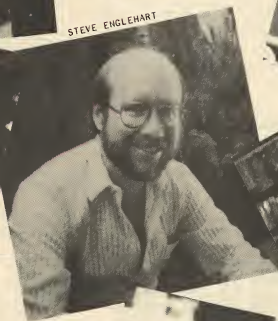


photo (C) Robert Fineson

TRINA ROBBINS



STEVE ENGLEHART



DORI SODA



CHRIS CLAREHONT



photo (C) Clay Geerdes

SERGIO ARAGONES



photo (C) Clay Geerdes

AL GORDON



Photo (C) Carolyn Chin

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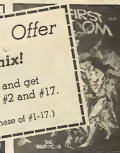
Jim Steranko, artist & publisher of *Prevue*, says:
*"Katz works like an atomic reactor overloading...
 a wealth of staggering and meticulous detail that leaves even the
 most hard-boiled comic illustrators awestruck."*

Sergio Aragones, *Mad Magazine*, says:
*"Jack Katz has created a legend...
 of giants, of winged creatures, dragons..."*

Jerry Siegel, creator of *Superman*, says:
*"...a visually astounding fantasy-adventure tale of such originality
 and power you literally have to see it to believe it."*

Jack Kirby, *The "King of Comics"*, says:
"...outstanding in both premise and rendering."

Howard Zimmerman, editor-in-chief *Starlog & Comics Scene*, says:
"(Jack Katz is) taking us with him on the wings of enchantment."



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NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

BY

Joe

The 1983 Spring season has been good to aficionados of the underground. Spring is, typically, a time of re-birth and growth--and this has been no less apparent in the u.g. marketplace, which has suddenly blossomed with the release of several new titles. With doomsayers predicting an imminent death of underground publications, the six new releases are a refreshing sign that the field is not yet barren but, indeed, revitalized. Ah yes, the hope of Spring... And perhaps we can yet stave off winter encroachment.

The most recent book to hit the stands is RIP OFF #12. A solid package for \$2.95, this magazine-sized 12th issue continues its now traditional offering of international fare with a special section on the cartoonists of Denmark. Ten artists have been selected to represent their country, with Henning Kure's "Copenhagen" being a real stand-out. Kudos to the Rip Off crew for this exciting presentation of international work and for the education which would be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain otherwise.

And for the diehards of good ol' American cultcha, RIP OFF #12 serves up the second chapter of "The Idiots Abroad", featuring those Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers, in 11 pages of full colour. A one-page Fat Freddy's Cat strip and a Robert Williams painting from his "Zombie Mystery" series also benefit from this issue's expanded colour section. The Wonder Wart-Hog extravaganza, "Battle of the Titans", concludes this issue while Marti's "Taxi Driver" continues to run, and Dorman's Doggie, Dinoboy, and Coochy Cooty all make appearances. Rounding out the issue are stories and photos on diverse subjects, from robots to censorship. Definitely a must-have double-bag item!

Last Gasp has also given the lie to the

name of its publishing enterprise and, with the release of five new books last month, is nowhere near its dying breath! First on the list is WEIRDO #7, featuring contributions from Spain, Jeff John, Dori Seda, Robert Williams, Drew Friedman, and more. Crumb fanatics might wish for more than the eight-page "Uncle Bob's Mid-Life Crisis", but the story's usual Crumb quality will perhaps compensate for the absence of more of his work this issue. And despite "Uncle Bob's" self-professed anxieties, he ain't got nuthin' ta worry about!

After a two-year hiatus, SAN FRANCISCO COMIC BOOK has again seen the light of day with the publication of its 7th issue. Edited by Gary Arlington, this power-packed book is priced at \$2.00 and features some outstanding work by Joel Beck, Terry Boyce, Roger Brand, John Burnham, Tom Crow, Kim Deitch, Melinda Gebbie, Bill Griffith, Steve LeClair, Larry Rippee, Dori Seda, Gilbert Shelton, Barry Siegel, Bruce Simon, and Spain. Whew! Also included is a letter written by Willy Murphy several years ago, accompanied by an original illustration--a personal and nostalgic reminder of the deceased cartoonist's incomparable talent. Well worth the two-year

wait, SAN FRANCISCO COMIC BOOK #7 is one of the best in the title's history.

Perhaps the most disappointing of the Last Gasp lot, though still a must for Bode fans, is the long-awaited JUNKWAFFEL #5. Couched in its new magazine size, the issue presents some never-before-seen Bode art as well as a few reprints from obscure fanzines. Though somewhat sparse for its \$2.50 cover price, the new JUNKWAFFEL nonetheless features more of the unmis-

takable Bode charm: the sardonic wit and detailed drawing style that we've all come to miss, not to mention a proliferation of lizards--at war and in space--and the ever-popular Bode broads.

The 4th issue of Bob Armstrong's MICKEY



A familiar scene in Denmark, too

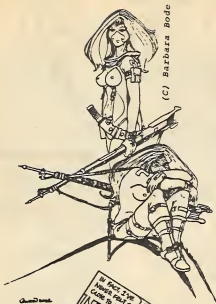
(C) Pihl and Møller

WONDER, THERE'S A HUGE PILE OF MONEY AND GUNS AND GAMBLING EQUIPMENT AND DRUGS IN THE BACK ROOM! MAY I KEEP THIS LITTLE BAG OF COINCE I FOUND? IT'S THE SMALLEST ONE! IT'S ONLY FORTY-FIVE POUNDS!

OF COURSE, LITTLE BROTHER! I OWE YOU FOR DEPLETING YOUR SUPPLY! BUT YOU MUSTN'T SELL ANY! YOU MUST GIVE IT AWAY!



(C) Shelton and Bell



(C) Barbara Bode



(C) Robert Crumb



(C) Barbara Bode



(C) Bob Armstrong



(C) Dalison Barrow

RAT is chock full of laughs, all for a paltry \$1.50. The infamous Rat crashes in and out of parties, takes on the youth scene and, in "The Survivor", degenerates even further as he gets "rehabilitated" and joins the middle-class masses for a time! Dizzy Ratstein makes a couple of swinging appearances, as do The Couch Potatoes, a real-life organization strangely dedicated to the "pleasures" of TV viewing. As a certified Elder of The Couch Potatoes, it's a wonder Armstrong could tear himself away from the tube long enough to produce the new MICKEY RAT!

Rounding out the list of new undergrounds is WIMMEN'S COMIX #8. Resurrected after six years since the 7th issue of this title, the new issue blossoms with the talent of Trina Robbins, Lee Marrs, Lynda Barry, Lee Binswanger, Caryn Leschen, Ann Hagler, Dori Seda, Terre Richards, Terry Boyce, Carol Lay, Melinda Gebbie, Phoebe Gloeckner, Kathryn LeMieux, Mary Wilshire, Sharon Rudahl, Terry Balawejder, and Dalison Barrow. Though Trina's stunning cover alone is worth the book's \$2.00 price, the entire issue has something worthwhile to say to men and women alike. With this tantalizing collection of strips from female cartoonists as a new beginning, let's hope we don't have to wait quite so long for the next issue.

You can meet many of the WIMMEN'S COMIX crew at Berkeley's WIMMEN'S DAY: Sunday, June 12th, 1-4 p.m. Original art will be on display and for sale, and a 'jam' drawing will be raffled off to a lucky customer. Join COMICS & COMIX for WIMMEN'S DAY at the Berkeley store, 2461 Telegraph Ave.

John McClure is in the process of putting together a fanzine devoted to underground and newwave comix, and he's looking for submissions. All budding writers or artists whose interests lie outside the mainstream should write to John for more information at: 1502 Ash, Muskogee, OK, 74401.

For more news on the underground scene, make sure to check out:

Bruce Sweeney's "Underground Station", in every issue of COMICS SCENE;
Clay Geerdes' COMIX WORLD/COMIX WAVE, P.O.B. 7081, Berkeley, CA, 94707: \$11.00 for a two-year subscription;
Bruce Chrislip's CITY LIMITS GAZETTE, 1562 E. Olive Way #107, Seattle, WA, 98102: four issues for \$3.00 postpaid.



(C) Mary Wilshire



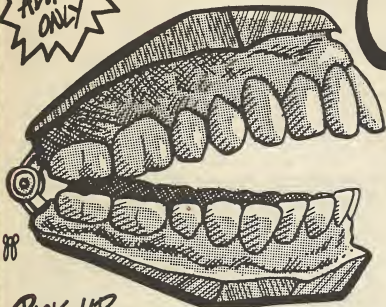
(C) Gary Parr Tebbels



(C) Bob Armstrong

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★ WEIRDO #7

★ MICKEY RAT #4

★ WIMMEN'S
COMIX #8

★ SAN FRANCISCO
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TERRIFIED

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who she is . . .
Where she came from . . .

... or why they're
trying to kill her!

JONES &
ANDERSON **THIS SUMMER FROM**



The Telegraph Wire



Telegraph Wire # 9 (1983)

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